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23 June 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Chief, Development  
Projects Division

SUBJECT: Comparison of Priority Needs of  
COMOR for TALENT Materials

1. In a recent memorandum to Mr. Bissell you indicated that you were asking me to prepare a paper outlining the relative needs of the COMOR for the use of the TALENT assets. Your concern, I believe, rested on the fear that by overworking an asset in regard to the Cuban area an untoward incident might jeopardize the use of the capability, for political reasons, in areas of greater importance.
2. Our highest priority target area is of course the USSR despite the fact that we have no present TALENT capability (in terms of political approval).
3. The views of the community with regard to the Communist China area and Southeast Asia have been expressed most recently and precisely in the paper which the Director submitted to the Special Group last Thursday. That paper in effect did discriminate between the two, as putting the latter of most immediate importance, though this stems from a combination of factors including a current military situation and the fact that the weather in the North is now and for some time to come not propitious as well as the fact that our longer term objective in Communist China can indeed be met adequately a bit later than Southeast Asia. The COMOR, however, is by no means rating in some absolute sense Southeast Asia higher than Communist China.
4. The COMOR has not requested and does not now request coverage of the Middle East area. Therefore, it does not appear in our priority consideration. This does not mean of course that at any moment there could not arise a situation of such immediate criticality as to supersede all of our stated needs.

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5. It is the COMOR's view as expressed in my memorandum of today on recoverage of Cuba that alleged new developments in Cuba are of critical importance to the U. S. The reader of the memorandum transmitted to you today on the recoverage of Cuba ought not to conclude that the COMOR's consideration was casual or in fact the consideration of this question in any previous instance has been casual. The Chairman has made every effort to press for the close scrutiny and most responsible judgment possible. I know of no way, except one which I will mention next, to make an absolute comparison between this (where we have a capability) and the prime objective (where at the moment we do not). A comparison of this vis-a-vis our problem recently presented to the Special Group is most meaningful only when we are informed by operations that indeed U. S. capabilities exist only to get one not both accomplished. Is it your desire that such a proposition should be presented to the COMOR?

6. Having stated the foregoing and thus outlined as best I can the sort of discrimination which your recent memorandum requested, I would like to suggest that perhaps the decision which you seek, namely, not to recover Cuba, is an operational-political one. On the latter score I understand we have the permission. On the operational side it could well be that any number of considerations, including the one bearing upon the security of the base, would lead you to advise against this.

7. One can disagree with the community's statement of intelligence need but this is somewhat different from telling them to change what they think is their need.

8. I strongly suspect that the foregoing will not met your hopes for a means of discontinuing the Cuban coverage on the grounds that the intelligence need, taking into account such risk factors as COMOR has been made aware of, no longer exists. However, it is the best I can do.

JAMES Q. REBER  
Chief

Special Requirements Staff, DPD-DDP

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